edition. So what has been changed? The first major addition has been the inclusion of more data to substantiate and illustrate the biology of kangaroos. For example, we now have a graph showing that kangaroos have an amazing ability to increase speed of hopping with little increase in metabolic rate (and thus energy expenditure). Methods of age estimation of animals are provided in some detail. There are some other minor improvements: there is now one consolidated reference list instead of listing references per chapter.

Secondly, the material has been significantly updated. I have reviewed some new editions of books that have barely changed; this is not the case with *Kangaroos*. Indeed, I counted some 47 new references published since the original edition. The book is written well and is illustrated to good effect.

Who is the audience for this book? I would expect naturalists who ponder on the significance and adaptive advantages of behaviour, physiology and anatomy would enjoy the book. Scientists will appreciate its rigorous, evidence-based approach. It is not a coffee table book (although there are 16 colour plates); rather, it is a book that seeks to demonstrate and explain the remarkable, advanced adaptations kangaroos have to their many environments.

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Australia's Amazing Kangaroos: Their conservation, unique biology and coexistence with humans

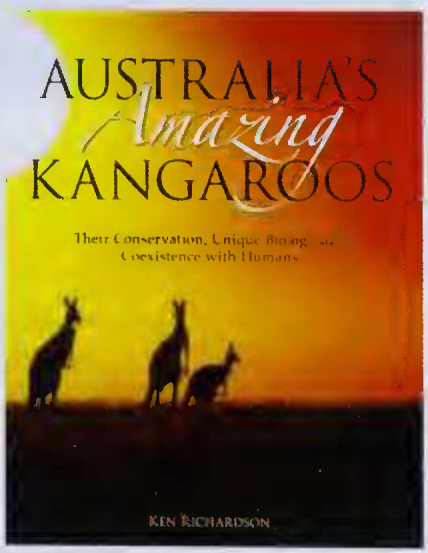
by Ken Richardson

Publisher: *CSIRO publishing, Collingwood, 2012. 240 pages, paperback.*
ISBN: 9780643097391. RRP $ 49.95

Some years ago at an international conference I had difficulty in explaining to some delegates from where I came. Some thought I came from Austria, while others were convinced I came from the UK. The problem was solved by my hopping briefly with arms in front—aha, Australia, they all said at once. Kangaroos = Australian!

Ken Richardson's excellent book aims to 'bridge the ever-widening gap between the mountains of detailed information found in the serious scientific literature and the many members of the public who wish to be better informed about Australia's iconic kangaroos. In today's rapidly changing world, the better we are informed about our native animals the better their prospects for survival' (page v).

The result is a scientifically authoritative, contemporary, beautifully illustrated book that is



essentially written in two sections.

In the first, a brief account of marsupial evolution, kangaroo characteristics and conservation status precedes a species by species account of each member of the suborder Macropodiformes. This section could be considered an update on Ron Strahan's (and Steve Van Dyck's updated) seminal work *The Mammals of Australia* – complete with the species' distinctive features, distribution, threatening factors, management actions and an excellent photograph.

The second section covers Adaptation and Function (morphological adaptations, mobility and movement, diet, reproduction etc.), Conservation, and finally Kangaroos and Humans Today, which includes an informative account of the kangaroo harvesting industry.

This last chapter distinguishes this book from many others on today's market, including Dawson's *Kangaroos*, which I have reviewed previously in this issue (see p. 56). For example, a most useful Appendix outlines procedures to be used when kangaroos are commercially harvested from the four states in which the industry is legally operating. Hopefully this chapter will inform the current and sometimes heated debate about harvesting kangaroos as a useful resource versus protecting a much-loved natural icon. Of course, such a discussion is fraught with challenges, with protagonists arguing from quite different platforms (ethical/moral/aesthetic versus pragmatic/resource utilisation).

This is a well written and well presented book. Its acknowledgements are a who's who of Australian mammalogy and the photographs are excellent.

So who will gain most by buying the book? Readers will need a reasonable background knowledge of mammalian biology. They will need an understanding of biological terms, although there is a glossary to help a reader's comprehension. The book will certainly appeal to naturalists – the first section will help in macropodid identification while the latter chapters provide anatomical, physiological and behavioural bases for observations people make in the field.

Biology students will enjoy the clear presentation, up to date science and lucid explanation of some quite sophisticated biological concepts. The case studies—Heirisson Prong Peninsula (Shark Bay) reintroduction of the Burrowing Bettong and the Proserpine Rock Wallaby recovery plan—provide excellent accounts of conservation management with realistic evaluations of their success.

In the interests of readability, sources are not cited in the text and the bibliography is thin and quite general. This detracts from its usefulness to researchers and students alike. Steve Van Dyck's name is misspelled and Emeritus Professor Ian Hume is given two such awards, but these are minor distractions from an otherwise most valuable addition to the popular literature on what most people regard as the most Australian of animals — the kangaroos.

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